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SUBJECT: PRESIDENT KABILA'S NEW YEAR'S MESSAGE

11. (U) In a televised New Year's message December 31, President Joseph Kabila thanked the Congolese for their patience and sacrifices as the country nears the end of the transition period. Affirming his determination to lead the nation to free and fair elections, he congratulated them on the high turnout both for voter registration and for the referendum vote. He struck a conciliatory tone with those who voted against the constitution, saying that one group had not won victory over another, but that the Congolese people had expressed their desire for democratic institutions.

12. (U) Kabila singled out the National Assembly and Senate for their legislative work, the police forces for assisting with the elections process, and the international community for having a positive influence on the transition process. Kabila also urged politicians and citizens alike to maintain respect for the law in the coming year.

13. (U) Comment: Resisting any temptation of triumphalism, Kabila's message was moderate and conciliatory in tone. It struck a welcome note of inclusivity. While his speech delivered no surprises, it reinforced the central message of the need to move toward elections and to bring the transition to a successful close by June 2006. End comment.

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